

Chapter 2: Planning Process

2 Documenting the Planning Process

Documentation of the planning process, including public involvement, is required to meet FEMA's DMA 2000 (44CFR§201.4(c)(1) and §201.6(c)(1)). This section includes a description of the planning process used to develop this plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how all of the involved agencies participated.

2.1.1 Description of the Planning Process

The Payette County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan was developed through a collaborative process involving all of the organizations and agencies detailed in Section 1.0 of this document. The County's local coordinator contacted these organizations directly to invite their participation and schedule meetings of the planning committee. The planning process included 5 distinct phases which were in some cases sequential (step 1 then step 2) and in some cases intermixed (step 4 completed though out the process):

1. **Collection of Data** about the extent and periodicity of wildfires in and around Payette County. This included an area encompassing Gem, Adams, Washington, Valley and Boise Counties to insure a robust dataset for making inferences about fires in Payette County specifically; this included a wildfire extent and ignition profile.
2. **Field Observations and Estimations** about wildfire risks including fuels assessments, juxtaposition of structures and infrastructure to wildland fuels, access, and potential treatments by trained wildfire specialists.
3. **Mapping** of data relevant to wildfire control and treatments, structures, resource values, infrastructure, fire prone landscapes, and related data.
4. **Facilitation of Public Involvement** from the formation of the planning committee, to a public mail survey, news releases, public meetings, public review of draft documents, and acceptance of the final plan by the signatory representatives.
5. **Analysis and Drafting of the Report** to integrate the results of the planning process, providing ample review and integration of committee and public input, followed by acceptance of the final document.

Planning efforts were led by the Project Director, Dr. William E. Schlosser, of Northwest Management, Inc. Dr. Schlosser holds 4 degrees in natural resource management (A.S. geology; B.S. forest and range management; M.S. natural resource economic & finance; Ph.D. environmental science and regional planning). Project Specialist, Mr. Toby R. Brown, holds a B.S. degree in natural resource management. Together, they led a team of resource professionals that included fire mitigation specialists, wildfire control specialists, resource management professionals, and hazard mitigation experts.

They were the point-people for team members to share data and information with during the plan's development. They and the planning team met with many residents of the county during the inspections of communities, infrastructure, and hazard abatement assessments. This methodology, when coupled with the other approaches in this process, worked effectively to integrate a wide spectrum of observations and interpretations about the project.

The planning philosophy employed in this project included the open and free sharing of information with interested parties. Information from federal and state agencies was integrated

into the database of knowledge used in this project. Meetings with the committee were held throughout the planning process to facilitate a sharing of information between cooperators.

When the public meetings were held, many of the committee members were in attendance and shared their support and experiences with the planning process and their interpretations of the results.

2.2 Public Involvement

Public involvement in this plan was made a priority from the inception of the project. There were a number of ways that public involvement was sought and facilitated. In some cases this led to members of the public providing information and seeking an active role in protecting their own homes and businesses, while in other cases it led to the public becoming more aware of the process without becoming directly involved in the planning process.

2.2.1 News Releases

Under the auspices of the Payette County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Planning Committee, news releases were submitted to area news papers and radio.

2.2.1.1 Radio Messages

A short news release was aired over the KLTB radio station FM 104.3, the week prior to the public meetings announcing the goals of the planning committee, the purpose of the mitigation plan, the date and times of public meetings, and contact information.

2.2.1.2 Newspaper Articles

Committee and public meeting announcements were published in the local newspaper ahead of each meeting. The following is an example of one of the newspaper announcements that ran in the local newspaper.

Press Release

The Payette County Wildfire Mitigation Plan has been launched to complete an All Hazards Mitigation Plan for Payette County as part of the FEMA program. The Payette County All Hazards Mitigation Plan will include risk analysis at the community level with predictive models for where disasters are likely to occur. The local coordinator for this effort is Sheriff Bob Barowsky. Northwest Management, Inc. has been retained by the county to provide risk assessments, mapping, field inspections, interviews, and to collaborate with the committee to prepare the plan. The coordinating team includes fire districts, land managers, elected officials, community members and others. Northwest Management specialists will conduct an analysis and make recommendations for potential treatments to mitigate the loss potential from these natural and man-caused hazards.

One of the first steps in gathering information about risk in the county is to conduct a homeowner's survey. Northwest Management, Inc., in cooperation with the planning committee, will be mailing a brief survey to randomly selected homeowners in the county seeking details about home construction materials, proximity to water sources, and past experiences with hazards in the county. This survey is very important to the

success of the plan. Those homes that receive a survey are asked to please take the time to complete it thereby benefiting the community overall.

The planning team will be conducting Public Meetings to discuss preliminary findings and to seek public involvement in the planning process. A notice on the date and location of these meetings will be posted in local newspapers.

For more information on the Fire Mitigation Plan project in Payette County contact your County Commissioner, Northwest Management, Inc. project director Dr. William Schlosser (208) 883-4488, Sheriff Barowsky at (208) 642-6008.

2.2.2 Public Mail Survey

In order to collect a broad base of perceptions about wildland fire and individual risk factors of homeowners in Payette County, a mail survey was conducted. Using a state and county database of landowners in Payette County, homeowners from the Wildland-Urban Interface surrounding each community were identified. In order to be included in the database, individuals were selected that own property and have a dwelling in Payette County, as well as a mailing address in Payette County. This database created a list of 1,637 unique names to which were affixed a random number that contributed to the probability of being selected for the public mail survey. A total of 237 landowners meeting the above criteria were selected.

The public mail survey developed for this project has been used in the past by Northwest Management, Inc., during the execution of other WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plans. The survey used The Total Design Method (Dillman 1978) as a model to schedule the timing and content of letters sent to the selected recipients. Copies of each cover letter, mail survey, and communication are included in Appendix IV.

The first in the series of mailing was sent May 12, 2004, and included a cover letter, a survey, and an offer of receiving a custom GIS map of the area of their selection in Payette County if they would complete and return the survey. The free map incentive was tied into assisting their community and helping their interests by participating in this process. Each letter also informed residents about the planning process. A return self-addressed enveloped was included in each packet. A postcard reminder was sent to the non-respondents on May 21, 2004, encouraging their response. A final mailing, with a revised cover letter pleading with them to participate, was sent to non-respondents on May 27, 2004.

Surveys were returned during the months of May, June and July. A total of 107 residents responded to the survey. No surveys were returned as undeliverable. The effective response rate for this survey was 45%. Statistically, this response rate allows the interpretation of all of the response variables significantly at the 99% confidence level.

2.2.2.1 Survey Results

A summary of the survey's results will be presented here and then referred back to during the ensuing discussions on the need for various treatments, education, and other information.

All of the respondents to the survey have a home in Payette County, and 99% consider this their primary residence. About 47% of the respondents were from the New Plymouth area, 20% were from the Fruitland area, 13% were from the Payette area, 4% from Parma, with the remainder were from other areas of the county.

All of the respondents correctly identified that they have emergency telephone 911 services in their area. Their ability to correctly identify if they are covered by a rural fire district was 98%.

Respondents were asked to identify if their home is protected by a rural or city fire district. All of the county's residents have rural or city fire protection. Of the respondents, 98% correctly identified they live in an area protected by a rural or city fire district. Only 2% responded they do not have a fire district covering their home, when in fact they do. None of the respondents indicated that they were inside of a fire protection district when in reality they are outside of a protection district.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of roofing material covering the main structure of their home. Approximately 59% of respondents indicated their homes were covered with a composite material (asphalt shingles). About 26% indicated their home were covered with a metal (eg., aluminum, tin) roofing material. Roughly 13% of the respondents indicated they have a wooden roofing material such as shakes or shingles. The additional 2% of respondents had a variety of combustible and non-combustible materials indicated.

Residents were asked to evaluate the proximity of trees within certain distances of their homes. Often, the density of trees around a home is an indicator of increased fire risk. The results are presented in Table 2.1

Table 2.1 Survey responses indicating the proximity of trees to homes.			
Number of Trees	Within 250 feet of your home	Within 75 feet of your home	
None	6%		5%
Less than 10	41%		61%
Between 10 and 25	29%		26%
More than 25	24%		8%

Approximately 93% of those returning the survey indicated they have a lawn surrounding their home. Of these individual homesites, 98% indicated they keep this lawn green through the fire season.

The average driveway length of the respondents was approximately 557 feet long, from their main road to their parking area. Only one of the respondents had a driveway over ½ mile long, and only one respondent had a driveway over ¼ of a mile long, but less than ½ mile. Both of the homes with lengthy driveways, have turnouts allowing two vehicles to pass each other in the case of an emergency. Approximately 63% of all homeowners indicated they have an alternative escape route, with the remaining 37% indicating only one-way-in and one-way-out.

Roughly 15% of the respondents in Payette County indicated they have someone in their household trained in wildland fire fighting. Approximately 9% indicated someone in the household had been trained in structural fire fighting. However, it is important to note that these questions did not specify a standard nor did it refer to how long ago the training was received.

Respondents were asked to complete a fuel hazard rating worksheet to assess their home's fire risk rating. An additional column titled "results" has been added to the table, showing the percent of respondents circling each rating (Table 2.3).

Circle the ratings in each category that best describes your home.

Table 2.3. Fuel Hazard Rating Worksheet		Rating	Results
Fuel Hazard	Small, light fuels (grasses, forbs, weeds, shrubs)	1	79%
	Medium size fuels (brush, large shrubs, small trees)	2	16%
	Heavy, large fuels (woodlands, timber, heavy brush)	3	5%
Slope Hazard	Mild slopes (0-5%)	1	81%
	Moderate slope (6-20%)	2	17%
	Steep Slopes (21-40%)	3	1%
	Extreme slopes (41% and greater)	4	1%
Structure Hazard	Noncombustible roof and noncombustible siding materials	1	33%
	Noncombustible roof and combustible siding material	3	28%
	Combustible roof and noncombustible siding material	7	11%
	Combustible roof and combustible siding materials	10	28%
Additional Factors	Rough topography that contains several steep canyons or ridges	+2	Average -2.8 pts
	Areas having history of higher than average fire occurrence	+3	
	Areas exposed to severe fire weather and strong winds	+4	
	Areas with existing fuel modifications or usable fire breaks	-3	
	Areas with local facilities (water systems, rural fire districts, dozers)	-3	

Calculating your risk

Values below are the average response value to each question.

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{Fuel hazard} & \underline{1.2} & \times \text{Slope Hazard } \underline{1.1} = \underline{1.32} \\
 \text{Structural hazard} & + & \underline{4.5} \\
 \text{Additional factors (+ or -)} & & \underline{-2.8} \\
 \text{Total Hazard Points} & = & \underline{3.02}
 \end{array}$$

Table 2.4. Percent of respondents in each risk category as determined by the survey respondents.

00% – Extreme Risk = 26 + points
02% – High Risk = 16–25 points
26% – Moderate Risk = 6–15 points
72% – Low Risk = 6 or less points

Maximum household rating form score was 18 points, as assessed by the homeowners. These numbers were compared to observations made by field crews trained in wildland fire fighting. These results indicate that for the most part, these indications are only slightly lower than the risk rating assigned by the “professionals”. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that Payette

County landowners involved in this survey have a more realistic view of wildfire risk than the landowners in other Idaho counties where these questions have been asked.

Respondents were asked “if offered in your area, would members of your household attend a free, or low cost, one-day training seminar designed to teach homeowners in the wildland–urban interface how to improve the defensible space surrounding your home and adjacent outbuildings?” 39% of the respondents indicated a desire to participate in this type of training.

Homeowners were also asked, “How do you feel Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Mitigation projects should be funded in the areas surrounding homes, communities, and infrastructure such as power lines and major roads?” Responses are summarized in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5. Public Opinion of Wildfire Mitigation Funding Preferences.

	Mark the box that best applies to your preference		
	100% Public Funding	Cost-Share (Public & Private)	Privately Funded (Owner or Company)
Home Defensibility Projects	14%	36%	50%
Community Defensibility Projects	41%	48%	11%
Infrastructure Projects Roads, Bridges, Power Lines, Etc.	61%	23%	16%

2.2.3 Committee Meetings

The following list of people who participated in the planning committee meetings, volunteered time, or responded to elements of the Payette County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan’s preparation.

- Allen Blevins.....New Plymouth Rural Fire District
- Bob MacKenziePayette County Assessor
- Darwin DecrooPayette City and Rural Fire District
- Jeff SandsPayette City and Rural Fire District
- Jack HellbuschParma Rural Fire District
- Jerry Henggeler.....Payette County Resident
- John McGee.....Northwest Management, Inc.
- Rick WatkinsFruitland Fire District
- Robert BarowskyPayette County Sheriff
- Russell Warden.....Payette City and Rural Fire District
- Tera DumanNorthwest Management, Inc.
- Toby R. BrownNorthwest Management, Inc.
- Tom InloesContractor to the Payette County Assessor
- William Schlosser.....Northwest Management, Inc.

Committee Meetings were scheduled and held on the following dates:

April 7, 2004

Dr. William Schlosser opened the meeting with an over view of who had been invited to sit on the committee. The BLM and IDL were both invited to be on the committee, but had scheduling conflicts for this meeting. The USFS has no ownership in the county, but the adjacent Payette Nation Forest is aware of the planning process.

Bill began a slide presentation describing who Northwest Management Inc. is and how they were retained by the County Commissioners to produce the Wildfire Mitigation Plan. The rest of the presentation described the process under which the committee would develop the plan.

After the presentation discussion work began on mapping the major infrastructure of the county. Discussions took place about the number and diversity of gas lines that run through the county. Roger Henrie of the Williams natural gas pipeline was given as a contact for locating GIS layers with the location of the natural gas line. The National Pipe Line Safety commission located in Virginia may also be able to supply GIS layers with the location of all gas lines in the county and the state.

A general discussion ensued on what constitutes major infrastructure as defined by FEMA and Dr. Schlosser's presentation. There was general agreement on major roads, bridges, radio towers, cell phone towers, and high tension power lines. Many felt that telephone and fiber optic lines should also be included. After several minutes of discussion the general consensus was that major fiber optic or telephone lines should be seen as major infrastructure, but carrier lines should not. Major hubs provide necessary routing of communications during an emergency. Also the function of our modern economy is dependent upon phone lines for the use of credit cards.

The Rural Payette Fire District is not shown on the City and Rural Fire Protection map, because it is not a taxing district. Fire services are provided thru subscription. Approximately 90% of the people within the coverage do subscribe. If they respond to a non-subscriber structure fire, the owners are billed for the cost of fighting the fire. This district should be shown on the map; thus, the Fire Chief drew the district's boundary lines on the map.

More accurate lines between the New Plymouth and Payette rural fire districts were also delineated on the maps. The maps will be revised and brought for review to the next meeting.

The Sand Hollow Rural Fire District was being represented by the New Plymouth Rural Fire District, which contracts its services to Sand Hallow. Sand Hallow does not have a fire station or equipment of its own. This was viewed as a major hole in fire coverage in the south end of the county.

The Parma Rural Fire District is run by Jack Hellbush from Canyon Co. They are aware of the planning efforts thru the Canyon Co planning process that NMI is doing.

Dr. Schlosser requested from the assessor the names and addresses of all homeowners in the county for the public survey. The assessor will have an electronic file ready by the next meeting.

Dr. Schlosser handed out fuel assessments, and FEMA's Potential Fire Hazard Severity Forms for the county and all communities. He requested each district review and comment on the documents by next weeks meeting. Also distributed was Gem County's Resources and Capabilities write-up. Dr. Schlosser holds this to be an excellent example of what he would like each district to put together to describe Payette County's capabilities. He also requested this document to be ready by next week.

The meeting ended at 4pm.

April 14, 2004

John McGee opened the meeting by explaining what NMI had accomplished since the last the meeting and what we still needed from the committee to complete the draft document. Many changes have been made to the maps, but the committee needs to make sure corrections are accurate.

Maps: The committee meeting began by reviewing and making corrections to the new maps. Local fire department representatives had a only minor adjustments to boundary lines, although they did point out that many of the marked “municipal water sources” were actually private wells that did not have hookups for emergency water apparatus. They did have additional knowledge of existing private water sources that they did have access to that were not on the map. Also, some of the year round canals are also used for drafting purposes. It was decided that there needs to be some differentiation between private and municipal wells on the map. There will need to be a fairly in-depth discussion of water issues and Mutual Aid or Auto Aid in the final document.

There was ample discussion regarding methods of gaining additional water sources if funding was available. One example was installing permanent, filtered draft hoses with hookups near the road at critical access points. They also noted that the Chevron-Williams Pipeline was not yet on the map. *The Fruitland Fire Chief noted that he might have aerial photos of the pipelines.*

Sheriff Barowsky brought corrected infrastructure map, which has accurate locations of cell towers, repeaters, etc. He also provided NMI with the Master Transportation Plan for all of Payette County. This document contains valuable information regarding road systems and capabilities.

Survey: After the surveys were reviewed the committee noted that an additional question be added regarding private wells that are immediately accessible to emergency apparatus. Also, the two questions on the first page asking about trees do not apply in this county. Committee also felt that a sentence in the opening letter should be added so that Spanish speaking residents may request a copy of the survey in Spanish.

Community Assessments: There were only minor typo changes to the Payette County community assessments. There is an ordinance concerning construction of homes near BLM grounds that limits the type of construction materials used. Sheriff Barowsky was going to check on exact requirements. NMI needs to revise assessments to adhere to these codes.

Resources and Capabilities: Need to send an electronic version of the resources and capabilities survey to fire departments.

The committee spent much of the time discussing problems fire departments are currently facing throughout the county. One topic was how to decrease response times to rural residents. Many times the Payette Rural Fire Dept. ends up driving past the Fruitland City Fire Station on its way to fires. They need to find a way to be more efficient. Suggestions included: redistricting, county-wide district, and setting up an auto-aid agreement so that more than one dept. is dispatched at the same time. The county already has very good mutual aid agreements; however, this does not necessarily cut down on response times. The committee also agreed that currently unprotected BLM lands need to be addressed. *Also, the committee needs to find out who is responsible for Albertson’s Island.*

There was no representative from New Plymouth Fire Dept., so issues concerning New Plymouth and Sand Hollow were not thoroughly discussed. However, it was mentioned that there is not much potential for a substation in the Sand Hollow area, due to the lack of interest,

man-power, and resources. There is apparently some controversy over this issue that involves the New Plymouth Fire Dept. more directly.

The Payette Fire Chief enthusiastically noted that there is no room for expansion of the Payette City Fire Department. They currently have to park some of their trucks outside. The Parma Rural Fire Dept. is in the process of constructing a new station facility and there are plans for a new station in New Plymouth. The New Plymouth Rural Fire Dept. will eventually need a rural substation in the Sand Hollow area.

Many committee members had need for new equipment, etc. They were told to be very specific when adding these needs to their survey. They were also reminded to include any current mitigation projects they were conducting and any mutual aid agreements they had. Sheriff Barowsky has a list of current radio/communication capabilities and needs that he will send to NMI. Included on this list are needs for GPS equipment on trucks, in dispatch, etc.

Training/Retention: Committee came up with some common needs regarding training and retention including the need for more funding. Their number one problem seemed to be paying to have instructors teach the courses. Like any other less populated county, they have problems getting volunteers to give up even more time and money to attend training sessions during the week. Federal aid to pay them to come to training sessions works very well, but districts can't afford to do this themselves. Video/Satellite/Internet training courses are becoming more popular. This type of training can be done in the evenings when volunteers are more likely to come and they are more affordable. Another suggestion was the development of a multi-agency training center. Other programs and grants were discussed, but they were more specific to each station.

2.2.4 Public Meetings

Public meetings were held during the planning process, as an integral component to the planning process. It was the desire of the planning committee, and the Payette County Commissioners to integrate the public's input to the development of the fire mitigation plan.

Formal public meetings were scheduled on August 3, 2004, at New Plymouth, Idaho, and on August 5, 2004, at Payette City, Idaho. The purpose of these meetings was to share information on the planning process with a broadly representative cross section of Payette County landowners. Both meetings had wall maps posted in the meeting rooms with many of the analysis results summarized specifically for the risk assessments, location of structures, fire protection, and related information. The formal portion of the presentations included a PowerPoint presentation made by Project Leader, Toby R. Brown. During his presentations, comments from committee members, fire chiefs, and others were encouraged in an effort to engage the audience in a discussion.

It was made clear to all in attendance that their input was welcome and encouraged, as specific treatments had not yet been decided, nor had the risk assessment been completed. Attendees were told that they could provide oral comment during these meetings, they could provide written comment to the meetings, or they could request more information in person to discuss the plan. In addition, attendees were told they would have an opportunity to review the draft plan prior to its completion to further facilitate their comments and input.

The formal presentations lasted approximately 1 hour and included many questions and comments from the audience. Following the meetings, many discussions continued with the committee members and the general public discussing specific areas, potential treatments, the risk analysis, and other topics.

Attendance at the public meetings included 6 individuals at the New Plymouth meeting, and 4 at Payette. The following are comments, questions or suggestions from the meetings:

The main questions and concerns of the area were the access into and out of several areas within the county. They talked about the lack of signage, bridges not being wide enough, not rated very high on the weight scale.

Several committee members had questions about the All Hazards Mitigation Plan and Toby explained that it would follow the Wildfire Mitigation Plan format.

The committee had no more questions, so everyone reviewed the maps provided by NMI. A couple areas on the map were not accurate and need to be fixed. These areas were highlighted by NMI and will be fixed before the final draft maps are presented

2.2.4.1 Meeting Notices

Public notices of this meeting were printed in the **Independent Enterprise** the week of July 26, 2004.

Payette County Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan

The Payette County Fire Mitigation Plan has been completed in draft and is available to the public for review and comment at locations throughout the County. The Payette County Fire Mitigation Plan includes risk analysis at the community level with predictive models for where fires are likely to ignite and where they are likely to spread rapidly once ignited. The coordination for this effort is being provided by Bob Barowsky, Payette County Sheriff. The committee includes rural and wildland fire districts, land managers, elected officials, agency representatives, and others.

For more information on the Fire Mitigation Plan or if you have questions contact, Northwest Management, Inc. project managers Vincent Corrao or William Schlosser at (208) 883-4488, or the Bob Barowsky (208) 642-6008, Ext.144.

Meeting dates and locations are listed below:

August 3, 2004 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM

New Plymouth Senior Citizens

126 N. Plymouth Ave (Main St.)

August 5, 2004 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Payette County Courthouse

District Court Room

2.3 Review of the WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plan

Review of sections of this document were conducted by the planning committee during the planning process as maps, summaries, and written assessments were completed. These individuals included fire mitigation specialists, fire fighters, planners, elected officials, and others involved in the coordination process. Preliminary findings were discussed at the public meetings, where comments were collected and facilitated.

The results of these formal and informal reviews were integrated into a DRAFT Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan. This plan was given to members of the planning committee on August 17, 2004. Edits from committee members were integrated into a revised DRAFT Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan and prepared for Public Review on September 15, 2004.

Public Review of this document is open from September 15, 2004 through September 29, 2004. Written comments will be accepted at the County Commissioners Office, the County Sheriff's Office, or at the Northwest Management, Inc., Office, in Moscow, Idaho.

You can send comments directly to Schlosser@consulting-foresters.com or call Northwest Management, Inc. at 208-883-4488.

Payette County Courthouse
1130 3rd Ave North
Payette, ID 83661-2400
Phone: (208) 642-6000
Fax: (208) 642-6011